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CONGRATULATING HOME EDUCATORS AND HOME SCHOOLED STUDENTS

Statement of HON. RON PAUL OF TEXAS

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- Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to support H. Res. 578, which celebrates the accomplishments of parents across the nation who have chosen to educate their children at home by designating the first week of October as 'National Home Schooling Week.' While serving in Congress, I have had the opportunity to get to know many of the home-schooling parents in my district. I am very impressed by the job these parents are doing in providing their children with a quality education. I have also found that home schooling parents are among the most committed activists in the cause of advancing individual liberty, constitutional government, and traditional values. I am sure my colleagues on the Education Committee would agree that the support of home schoolers was crucial in defeating the scheme to implement a national student test.

- Home schooling is becoming a popular option for parents across the country. In Texas alone, there are approximately 75,000 home schooling families educating an average of three

children per household. Home schooling is producing some outstanding results. For example, according to a 1997 study the average home schooled student scores near the 19th percentile on standardized academic achievement tests in reading, mathematics, social studies, and science. Further proof of the success of home schooling is the fact that in recent years, self-identified home schoolers have scored well above the national average on both the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) and the American College Test (ACT). All home schooled children, regardless of race, income-level, or gender achieve these high scores.

- Contrary to media-generated stereotypes portraying home schooled children as isolated from their peers, home schooled children participate in a wide variety of social, athletic, and extra-curricular activities. Home schooling parents have formed numerous organizations designed to provide their children ample opportunity to interact with other children. In fact, recent data indicates that almost 50 percent of home schooled children engage in extra-curricular activities such as group sports and music classes, while a third of home schooled children perform volunteer work in their communities.

- Mr. Speaker, to be a home schooling parent takes a unique dedication to family and education. In many cases, home school families must forgo the second income of one parent, as well as incurring the costs of paying for textbooks, computers, and other school supplies. Home schooling parents must pay these expenses while, like All-American families, struggling to pay state, local, and federal taxes.

- In order to help home schoolers, and all parents, devote more of their resources to their children's education, I have introduced the Family Education Freedom Act (H.R. 935). This bill provides all parents a \$3,000 per child tax credit for K-12 education expenses. This bill will help home school parents to provide their children a first-class education in a loving home environment.

- The Family Education Freedom Act will also benefit those parents who choose to send their children to public or private schools. Parents who choose to send their children to private school may use their tax credit to help cover the cost of tuition. Parents who choose to send their children to public schools may use their tax credit to help finance the purchase of educational tools such as computers or extracurricular activities like music programs. Parents may also use the credit to pay for tutoring and other special services for their children.

- Mr. Speaker, the best way to improve education is to return control over education resources to the people who best know their children's unique needs: those children's parents. Congress should empower all parents, whether they choose to home school or send their child to a public or private school, with the means to control their child's education. That is why I believe the most important education bill introduced in this Congress is the Family Education Freedom Act.

- In conclusion, I once again wish to express my strong support for H. Res. 578 and urge all my colleagues to support this resolution and acknowledge the accomplishments of those parents who have avoided the problems associated with an education controlled by federal 'educrats' by choosing to educate their children at home. I also urge my colleagues to help home schoolers, and all parents, ensure their children get a quality education by cosponsoring the Family Education Freedom Act.